

Dr. Chancellor in Washington.

Dr. William E. Chancellor, formerly superintendent of schools here and now superintendent of Washington, D. C. schools, has evidently found a field in the national capital eminently suited to his remarkable abilities as an organizer and systematizer. Washington school matters were permitted to get into a confused state, and the work of reconstruction has fallen into the hands of Dr. Chancellor, a man admirably adapted for the task. The New York Evening Post of October 26 published an extensive review of school conditions in Washington:

"Dr. Chancellor's first difficult problem in Washington was over the term of office of teachers. Congress recently passed an act embodying certain important changes in the school system of the city. That part of the act relating to the appointment of teachers has been the subject of conflicting opinions. Assistant United States Attorney McNamara, special counsel for the Board of Education, making interpretations of the new law governing the schools of the District of Columbia in one way, and R. J. Tracewell, comptroller of the treasury, rendering decisions in a diametrically opposite manner. According to Mr. McNamara the law automatically continued the appointments of all teachers in the District public schools. He said in the opinion sent to the board:

"With this opinion in mind the special counselor declared that the board had ruled illegally in reappointing certain bodies of teachers and holding up the certification of others whose marks had been merely fair. The appointment of teachers, as made by the new board upon the recommendation of the superintendent for one year merely, was also declared illegal."

"Dr. Chancellor at once adjusted himself to the decision and finding that 'the fixing of the term of a year for certain officers and teachers is probably incorrect legally,' recommended 'that all teachers hitherto appointed and continued for the term of one year be appointed and continued without term stated.'

"In his recommendation the superintendent said:

"It was my idea in fixing the term to assure those persons involved that they would serve at least one year."

"It meant as a positive assurance of safety to the teachers, the measure was ineffective, for the dismissal of Mrs. Anna J. Cooper, principal of the M Street High School; Mr. James B. Clarke, a supervising principal; Miss Nails and Mr. John L. Love, teachers in the M Street High School, without any investigation, 'for the good of the service,' followed hard upon it. These dismissed teachers were all colored. Mr. M. F. F. Swartzell, principal of the Eastern High School, and Mr. Keene, a supervising principal, white teachers, who were not dismissed, but set aside or transferred, the latter to a grade principals and the former to a position, the salary for which was to be determined by the comptroller, upon their declination to accept these positions, were declared to have severed their connection with the service spontaneously, and an order for discharge in their cases was declared unnecessary.

"The color line is another perplexing problem that enters into Washington school work. Some colored teachers have been dismissed and others changed in position. Defenders of the rights of the dismissed and severed teachers are not wanting. At a recent mass meeting under the auspices of the colored citizens committee of public school affairs, resolutions were adopted setting forth that the colored people of the District of Columbia with one accord feel that a gross injustice has been done them. Continuing, it was stated that 'we view with confidence and respect the efforts of Superintendent Chancellor as he strives to adjust the conditions of the school system, and we feel that while his intentions are honest he has been seduced into an act of injustice to the people of the District by attempting to remove Mrs. Cooper from her position as principal of the M Street High School.' It was resolved that 'we appeal to Superintendent Chancellor, even at this late date, that he recommend that the Board of Education rescind the action taken and reinstate Mrs. Cooper in the position from which it is attempted illegally to displace her.'

"It is understood that Dr. Chancellor has in mind the deducing of the order of precedence in the education hierarchy, and is bent upon settling the relative status of grade principals, supervisors, etc.

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used, that night schools and public lecture systems should be much extended, and that debating and literary societies and other organizations should have the use of the school buildings. He says that the system of supervision is cumbersome, ineffective and costly, and that increased sittings for the children to be brought into the schools by the compulsory education laws must be found. He believes that this compulsory attendance must be strictly enforced, and that the training of the children in the grades should be more practical, particularly emphasizing the need of industrial skill.

"Dr. Chancellor, in his comment on the Reynolds report, has agreed with its recommendations, and shown a more drastic spirit. Particularly in the estimates he has aimed high. More than a million over the last appropriation is requested, buildings and grounds being the item showing the greatest increase. The sleeping beauty finds her awakenings demanding that she mortgage her patrimony. The superintendent shows that the District has used for schools only twenty-one per cent. of its municipal expenditures, whereas twenty-four of the leading cities spend more than thirty. He believes that the new laws make it imperative to increase existing accommodations largely and without delay; that the buildings themselves should be larger in order to house properly a reorganized system of grades, and finally, that there should be a closer and more direct supervision. There can be no doubt that Dr. Chancellor, notwithstanding his oft heard remark, 'If I stay here,' has in mind a very different state of affairs from those existing. He asks Congress this year for \$3,273,425."

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